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*To Hark,
With best regards,
Doji*

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AN ELEVENTH-CENTURY DEFENCE OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE *GUHYAGARBHA TANTRA*¹

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INTRODUCTION

Although Tantric Buddhism ultimately prevailed throughout the entire Tibetan Buddhist sphere, its initial introduction in Tibet was not without problems. Already towards the end of the eighth century considerable doubt seems to have existed as to whether highest yoga practices such as '[sexual] union' (*sbyor ba*) and 'liberation' (*sgrol ba*) should be taken literally and whether *tantras* containing such practices should be translated into Tibetan at all.² As a result, random translation and practice of *tantras* were forbidden by a royal decree of the Tibetan King Khri ral pa can (805–38).³ Nevertheless, the collapse of the Tibetan dynasty and its authority left the way open, according to some later Tibetan historians, for the tantric yogis to

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to all my teachers who have directly or indirectly contributed to this paper. In particular, I am indebted to David Jackson for his valuable suggestions on an earlier version of the paper; to Harunaga Isaacson for going through the final version and making priceless suggestions; to Anne MacDonald for her careful proof-reading and correction of my English and above all to my wife Orna for her valuable critique and consistent support.

² The scholarly reception of Buddhist *tantras* in the West was not smooth either. Nineteenth-century Western scholars such as L. Austine Waddell, Cecil Bendall, de la Vallée Poussin, M. Winternitz and T.W. Rhys David considered *Vajrayāna* teachings repulsive, a view which Western scholars today perhaps no longer share. See, for example, Newman (1987), p.27–41.

³ *Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*, p.4: *gsang sngags kyi rgyud rnams gzhung gis gsang bar bya ba yin te/ snod du ma gyur pa rnams la bshad cing bstan du yang mi rung la/ bar du bsgyur zhing spyod du gnang gis kyang ldem po dag tu bshad pa ma khrol nas sgra ji bzhi du 'dzin cing log par spyod pa dag kyang byung/ sngags kyi rgyud kyi nang nas thu zhing bod skad du bsgyur ba dag kyang byung zhes gdags kyil phyin chad gzungs sngags dang rgyud bla nas bka' stsal te sgyur du bcug pa ma gtogs pa/ sngags kyi rgyud dang sngags kyi tshig thu zhing bsgyur du mi gnang ngo// [The variants are not reproduced here].*

practice *sbyor sgrol* incorrectly, in ignorance of the import of the *tantras*.⁴

In the late tenth century, at the end of the Early Propagation Period (*Snga dar*) and the beginning of the Later Propagation Period (*Phyi dar*), Ye shes 'od, the king of Pu hrangs in west Tibet, although convinced of the authenticity of the *sūtra* teachings, became skeptical regarding the tantric teachings owing to the manner in which tantric practices such as *sbyor sgrol* were practiced during his time, and thus launched a campaign of denunciation. Twenty-one Tibetans, among them Rin chen bzang po (958–1055), were sent to Kashmir to find out if these practices and *tantras* were authentic.⁵ This campaign of criticism was continued in the late eleventh century by Ye shes 'od's grand nephews Byang chub 'od and Pho brang zhi ba 'od as well as by other Gsar ma scholars such as the eleventh-century translator 'Gos khug pa Lhas btsas.

During this important transitional period at the beginning of the Later Propagation Period, there lived a scholar and translator who was the first Tibetan known to have resisted this campaign of denunciation. This was the eleventh-century Rnying ma scholar Rong zom chos kyi bzang po (henceforth: Rong zom pa), who was not only active in translating new Sanskrit texts but also in transmitting, teaching and commenting on old texts passed down to him by his Tibetan predecessors.⁶ The sources give the impression that he was aware of skepticism among some of his contemporaries though they do not specify which written compositions he may have had access to. He is the first scholar known to have written in

⁴ See Seyfort Ruegg (1981) & Seyfort Ruegg (1984).

⁵ *Bu ston cho 'byung*, p.84: [ye shes 'od] *des mtshan nyid kyi theg pa bkar shes kyang sngags pa rnam kyis sbyor sgrol la sogs spyod log gis bka' yin min the tshom du gyur te/ rin chen bzang po la sogs pa khye'u nyi shu rtsa gcig brdzangs nas/*. Roberto Vitali, basing himself on both external evidence such as the cultural situation in Zhang zhung and internal evidence such as relevant passages in the *Mnga' ris rgyal rabs*, demonstrated that Ye shes 'od and the intelligentsia in Mnga' ris area had launched a campaign that pursued the eradication of teachings they believed were heretical. See Vitali (1996), p.226.

⁶ For an analysis of Rong zom pa's biographies and a short discussion of his works, see Almogi (forthcoming). For a detailed survey of his works and the revival of his textual tradition, see Almogi (1997).

defense of the teachings of the initial dissemination such as the **Guhyagarbha*⁷ and the Great Perfection (*Rdzogs chen*).⁸

The uncharted territory of the vast range of *bka' ma* and *gter ma* literature in the Rnying ma tradition and the number of polemical writings both for and against the authenticity of this literature which has been accumulated over the centuries makes a detailed investigation difficult. I am neither in a position to discuss the authenticity of the Rnying ma *tantras* in general nor to consult all the polemical writings on the issue,⁹ but shall primarily discuss the authenticity of only one important Rnying ma *tantra*, i.e., the *Guhyagarbha*, through the eyes of one exponent, i.e., Rong zom pa, and consider its

⁷ Although the term *Guhyagarbha* is commonly used to designate the basic *tantra* (*mūlatantra*) which contains twenty-two chapters (Otani 455), in a wider sense, it is also used to refer to the larger collection which includes eighty chapters (Otani 457). A comparison of the first twenty-two chapters of the two versions, however, reveals that they are similar but definitely not identical. Furthermore, the twenty-two-chaptered *mūlatantra* appears to have been assumed to be an extract from a greater unknown or inaccessible collection consisting of one hundred thousand chapters (*Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.4: *rdo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul drwa ba le'u stong phrag brgya pa las ... gsang ba snying po de kho na nyid nges pa las ...*). According to H. Isaacson (lecture), in the Indian Buddhist tantric tradition too it is often said that given *tantras* are extracts from much longer *tantras* which are usually said no longer to be accessible. Also the title of the *tantra* varies slightly in the different editions. It appears with or without *dpal*, with or without the prefix *rnam par*, and reads either *gsang ba* or *gsang ba'i*. The longest title of the *Guhyagarbha* noted is the one in the *Dkon mchog 'grel* (pp.33 & 248): '*Phags pa'i rtog pa'i rgyal po rdo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul drwa ba gsang ba snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i rgyud* (**Āryakalparājavajrasattvamāyājālaguhyagarbhatattvaviniścayatāntra*). Rong zom pa might have relied upon the *piṇḍārtha* of the *Guhyagarbha* (Otani 4755) attributed to Vimalamitra where the same title appears in the colophon. Alexis Sanderson has suggested that the original title of the text possibly may have been *Guhyakośa* (*Gsang ba'i mdzod*) on account of the references he discovered in the Sanskrit commentaries on the *Nāmasaṃgiti* by Bhavabhāṭa and Vilāsavajra. See Mayer (1996), p.122, n.13.

The asterisk (*) used to indicate a reconstructed Sanskrit title or name is employed in this paper only when the title or name occurs for the first time.

⁸ Karmay primarily alluded to Rong zom pa's defense of the Great Perfection and did not refer explicitly to his defense of the *Guhyagarbha* in the *Dkon mchog 'grel*. See Karmay (1988), p.13.

⁹ For a general discussion of the Rnying ma tradition with a backdrop of their opponents through the centuries, see Smith (1969), pp.2–15 and Smith (1970), pp.1–52. For a detailed discussion of some polemical literature concerning the issue of authenticity, see Kapstein (1989), pp.217–44. Robert Mayer, taking the *Phur pa Bcu gnyis kyi rgyud* as his text case, discussed the problem surrounding the authenticity of some Rnying ma *tantras*. See Mayer (1997).

critics from the period of the early tenth to the eleventh century. In the course of investigating historically the early Tibetan critiques of the *Guhyagarbha* and Rong zom pa's defense of it, I shall point out that some of the critiques appear to have been connected with problems regarding the textual tradition of the *Guhyagarbha*, and that these might indeed have provided grounds for suspicion.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE *GUHYAGARBHA* IN THE RNYING MA TRADITION

In connection with the controversies surrounding the authenticity of the *Guhyagarbha*, it may not be irrelevant to consider its traditional importance for Rnying ma tantric scholarship and practice. The *Guhyagarbha* is probably the most commented work in the Rnying ma tradition and has always played a fundamental role in the Rnying ma tantric philosophical systems, as already noted by G. Tucci.¹⁰ It is considered by most Rnying ma scholars, including Rong zom pa, as the 'basic tantra' (*rtsa rgyud*) of the *Mahāyoga* class.¹¹ Rong zom pa describes the *Guhyagarbha* as the "foremost of the authoritative scriptures of all the [vehicles] of *sūtra* and *tantra*" (*mtshan nyid dang rgyud thams cad kyi lung gi spyi*) and as the "secret of all *tathāgatas*" (*de bzhin bshegs pa thams cad kyi gsang ba*). He further describes it as the "ultimate" (*mthar thug*) of all philosophical tenets (*grub mtha*).¹²

¹⁰ Tucci (1980), p.258, n.202. The *tantra* has also been the focus of several studies by Western scholars, the most important of which are: Guenther (1984), a work intended to be a study of the *Guhyagarbha* from a phenomenological perspective eschewing what Guenther calls "any philological reductionism" (p. vii); Dan Martin (1987); Gyurme Dorje's (1987) translation of the enormous *Phyogs bcu mun sel* of Klong chen pa.

¹¹ Rong zom pa states (*Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.79): "Among these [tantric systems], this *Guhyagarbha tantra* belongs to [the class of] the *Mahāyoga tantras*. Among them, it is known as the 'basic tantra' which mainly establishes the methods of the Perfection [Phase]" (*de las gsang ba snying po'i rgyud 'di ni rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud du gtogs sol/ de'i tshul las kyang rdzogs pa'i tshul gtso bor sgrub par byed pa rtsa ba'i rgyud du grags sol/*).

¹² See the *Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.43. Furthermore, the *Guhyagarbha* has been glorified by attributing to it 'eight excellences' (*che ba brgyad*), namely, its being: 1. the king of all *tantras* (*rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po*), 2. the zenith of all vehicles (*theg pa thams cad kyi yang rtse*), 3. the source of all doctrines (*bstan pa thams cad kyi 'byung khungs*), 4. the general commentary to all authoritative scriptures (*lung thams cad kyi spyi 'grel*), 5. the noble ultimate intent of all buddhas (*rgyal ba thams*

II. RECORDS OF EARLY CRITICISM

The *Guhyagarbha*, in spite (or perhaps because) of its tremendous importance to the Rnying ma pas, has been the focus of much controversy. While the exponents of the Rnying ma *tantras* saw it as the 'word' (*bka'*) of the Buddha, its critics doubted its authenticity. In the following passages, I shall investigate evidence of criticism implied in Rong zom pa's writings and some of the earliest records of criticism, namely, the so-called 'refutations of false *mantra*' (*sngags log sun 'byin*).

II.1. CRITIQUES OF THE *TANTRA* EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED BY RONG ZOM PA'S DEFENSE

One of the most important sources for critiques against the *Guhyagarbha* is Rong zom pa's own writings. His commentary on the difficult points (*dka' 'grel*)¹³ of the *Guhyagarbha*—commonly called the *Dkon mchog 'grel* (*Jewel Commentary*)—is the earliest full-fledged commentary on this *tantra* by a Tibetan scholar.¹⁴ There, before refuting the opponents' criticism against the authenticity of the *Guhyagarbha*, he summarizes their positions in the following manner:¹⁵

cad kyi dgongs pa'i zhe phugs dam pa), 6. the ultimate of all [spiritual] results (*'bras bu thams ca kyi thar thug*), 7. the trail traversed by all *tathāgatas* (*de bzhin bshegs pa thams cad kyi gshegs pa'i shul*), and 8. the 'highway' of all yogis (*rnal 'byor pa thams cad kyi lam po che*). The *Khog gzhung gsal sgron* (Otani 4739) attributed to Vimalamitra is often given as the source of these eight attributes (*Mdzod kyi lde mig*, p.16).

¹³ The word *bka' 'grel* as a standard translation of the Sanskrit term *pañjikā* is attested in the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* (no.1461). In fact, Rong zom pa's commentaries on the *Guhyagarbha* and the *Buddhasamāyoga* are both considered to be *pañjikās*. Rong zom pa himself states (*Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.596) that his commentary to the *Guhyagarbha* is a "commentary on difficult points." However, although the commentary of the *Buddhasamāyoga* is indicated as a *dka' 'grel* in the title (*Sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro ma sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog ces bya ba'i rgyud kyi dka' 'grel*), I have not found the term in the commentary itself.

¹⁴ The two important Indian commentaries of the *Guhyagarbha*—Vilāsavajra's *Rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po dpal gsang ba snying po'i 'grel pa* (Otani 4718), commonly called *Spar khab* or *Rin po che'i spar khab* as indicated in the colophon, and Sūryasimha's *Dpal gsang ba snying po'i rgya cher 'grel pa* (Otani 4719), commonly known as the *Rgya cher 'grel*—are perhaps the only two full commentaries that predate Rong zom pa's *Dkon mchog 'grel*.

¹⁵ *Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.83: *gzhan yang kha cig 'di skad zer tel/ gsang sngags kyi rgyud du grags pa 'di dag la yang/ ldab bu dang zlos bur bstan pa mang du bstan tel/*

Moreover, some allege that numerous overlaps and redundancies occur in these [works] which are said to be the *tantras* of the *Mantra[yāna]*,¹⁶ thus undermining¹⁷ the [authenticity of the] *tantras*. Still some others¹⁸ suspect [these works] to have been composed by earlier Upādhyāyas [by], for instance, collecting [materials] from [other tantric] treatises. Therefore, thinking that [these works cannot] be an object of faith and that they also cannot be a cause of tantric

de bas na 'di dag rgyud yin par khungs phyung[l] yang kha cig sngon gyi mkhan po rnams kyi gzhung las bsdus pa la sogs pa rang gis sbyar ba yin par the tshom za ste/ de bas na dad pa'i yul du mi 'gyur ba dang/ las (zhi ba'i las?) dang dngos grub kyi rgyur yang mi rung ngo snyam du the tshom za ba ste/ 'di lta gsang ba bsdus pa las gsungs pa'i byang chub sems kyi le'u dang/ rigs kyi yum dang khro bo bcu'i sngags dang/ las dang drag po'i las kyi brtul zhugs dang/ phur pa byin gyis brlab pa'i cho ga lta bu/ sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i rgyud las kyang/ de bzhin du zlos bur gsungs pa dang/ gsang ba snying po dang brgyad bcu pa lta bu mang nyung zlos bur gsungs pa dang/ de bzhin du rdo rje gdan bzhī che chung dang/ kṛṣṇayāmāri che chung la sogs pa 'di dag ston pas de bzhin du gsungs so zhe bya ba ni/ zlos bur bshad pa don med par 'gyur la/ gal te gang zag gcig gis sdebs pa zhig yin na yang/ gong du bstan pa lta bu'i skyon du 'gyur la/ gang zag gi dpang po yang med del/ de bas na 'di lta bu 'brel pa bsgrub par mi nus so zhe na/.

¹⁶ According to H. Isaacson, overlaps and redundancies are common features in Indian tantric works.

¹⁷ The understanding of the term *khungs phyung* is critical in determining the authorial intent here. The spelling *khungs* ("source" or "origin") is preferable to *khung* ("hole" or "pit"), though a historical and etymological link between the two terms may exist. Also the spelling *phyung* seems, at least nowadays, to be preferable to *phyungs*, being the past and imperative form of 'byin ("extract, take out"). I translate the term *khungs phyung* here as "undermine," although one may translate it also as "challenge" or "question." A relation between *khungs phyung* and *sun phyung* ("refute" or "criticize"), may also be assumed: *khungs phyung* may be a specific *sun phyung*. The word *khungs phyung* is also used in the author's colophon which reads (*Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.249): yul dus gang zag dman bzhin bdag gis ni/ dam pas mdzad ces khungs phyung ma byas pas//. The line—dam pas mdzad ces khungs phyung ma byas pas—may be translated as "Because [I] did not challenge that [the *Guhyagarbha*] was composed by the sublime ones ..." However, in the following sentence from the *Theg chen tshul 'jug* which reads (p. 445): gal te bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i chos yin no zhe na ni/ nan gyis kun brtags pa thams cad kyang bsam gyis mi khyab pa yin par khungs dbyung du rung bar 'gyur ro, the expression *khungs dbyung du rung ba* may be translated as "questionable" or "challengeable." Cf., however, the *Sngags log sun* 'byin attributed to Lhas btsas which reads (p. 21): gñub sangs rgyas rin chen gyis rgya gar nas khungs byung/ rmad du byung ba'i chos brtsams/. Here the phrase *rgya gar nas khungs byung* seems to mean "having extracted from India[n] sources."

¹⁸ In all versions of the Tibetan texts available to me, the stroke (*shad*) is placed after *yang* reading *khungs phyung yang* which translates as "although it undermines ..." Contextually, this does not make any sense. Hence, I suggest the reading: ... *khungs phyung/ yang kha cig* ...

activities¹⁹ and accomplishments, they have their doubts. Likewise, (1) the *bodhicitta* chapter, (2) the *mantras* of the consorts of the families [of the five Buddhas] and of the ten wrathful ones, (3) the penance of the [peaceful] and wrathful activities, and (4) the ritual procedure for blessing the [ritual] peg, [all already] taught in the *Guhyasamāja*, are also redundantly taught in the *Māyā* [*tantras* such as the *Guhyagarbha*]. And [even within the *Māyā* cycle, *tantras*] like the *Guhyagarbha* and the *Brgyad bcu pa*²⁰ are taught in varying sizes redundantly. And similar [is the case with other works] such as the *Vajracatūspīṭha* (i.e., *Catūspīṭha*)²¹ and the *Kṛṣṇayāmāri*,²² which too vary in size. Claiming that the teacher (i.e., the Buddha) taught them in this manner (i.e., redundantly), [they argue further], would lead to the illogical consequence [of the implication that Buddha's] teachings, being redundant, are purposeless. If [these works] were compiled by a single individual, it would lead to faults such as those demonstrated above (i.e., not being an object of devotion and so forth). Furthermore, there is also no witness of person, and thus no [scriptural] coherency can be established in this way.

II.2. OTHER RECORDS OF EARLY CRITICISMS

There are a number of 'refutations of false *mantra*' written by the critics of the Rnying ma *tantras*. In this paper, however, I shall consider mainly the earliest ones, i.e., those written, or said to be written, either before or during Rong zom pa's time, namely, the writings by Ye shes 'od, Rin chen bzang po, Zhi ba 'od and Lhas btsas, and investigate them in the light of the *Guhyagarbha*.²³

¹⁹ The term "activities" here might not refer to the tantric activities themselves but rather to the ability or the power to carry them out for soteriological or worldly purposes.

²⁰ The *Brgyad bcu pa* (Tōh.98/ Otani 457), a *tantra* of the *Māyā* cycle, is mentioned in the ordinance of Zhi ba 'od as syncretistic ('dres ma). See Karmay (1998b), p.31 (English translation) and p.38 (Tibetan text).

²¹ *Śrīcatūspīṭhamahāyoginī tantrarāja* (Otani 67).

²² *Kṛṣṇayāmāri* (Tōh.469, 473); see also Samdhong Rinpoche, Vrajvallabha Dwivedi, et al., eds., *Kṛṣṇayāmāri tantra*, Rare Buddhist Texts Series 9, Sarnath, 1992.

²³ Ye shes 'od, Rin chen bzang po, Zhi ba 'od and Lhas btsas are all mentioned in the *Bu ston chos 'byung*, (pp.266 & 313) as persons who considered Rnying ma *tantras* to be inauthentic (*yang dag ma yin pa*).

II.2.1. THE ORDINANCE (*BKA' SHOG*)²⁴ OF LHA BLA MA YE SHES 'OD

The ordinance of Ye shes 'od was sent to the tantric practitioners of central Tibet and primarily called for the remedying and straightening of their view. One of the earliest references to the ordinance is made by Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364). Sog zlog pa blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624) quoted, interpreted and responded to it.²⁵ A certain two-page *Letter [Refuting] False Mantras (Sngags log spring yig)* by Ye shes 'od is listed in A khu chin's *Tho yig*.²⁶ Most probably only one such ordinance was issued by Ye shes 'od, and considering the size indicated in A khu chin's list, it appears that the one quoted by Sog zlog pa and the one mentioned in the list are one and the same text. At this stage, the only source for this letter is Sog zlog pa's *Nges don 'brug sgra*²⁷ from which Samten Karmay extracted the ordinance, edited, translated and commented upon it.²⁸ Although this ordinance does not refer explicitly to the *Guhyagarbha* or any other text, Karmay, "reading between the lines," thinks that the *Guhyagarbha*, among others, is the object of criticism. It is true that the practices of 'union' and 'liberation' are taught in the *Guhyagarbha*, but, in my opinion, criticism of such practices (or rather mal-practices) does not necessarily imply that all *tantras* that teach such practices were (or could be) the targets of criticism.

²⁴ The 'ordinance' of Ye shes 'od, had, like any other composition of this kind, no title. The *Bu ston chos byung** (p.313) does not speak of an "ordinance" but rather of "refutation of false mantras" (*sngags log sun 'byin pa*). It is elegantly referred to by Sog zlog pa (pp.179 & 187) as an "ordinance" (*bka' shog* or *chab shog*), and in A khu chin's list (no.15802), it is designated as a "letter" (*springs yig*). The line: "A request sent to the tantric practitioners of central Tibet by the Lha bla ma, the king of Pu hrangs, to remedy and straighten their view" (*pu hrangs kyi rgyal po lha bla ma'i zhal snga las bod dbus kyi sngags pa rnam la brdzangs pa/ gnyen po mdzad cing lta ba bsrang bar zhu ol/*) probably appeared at the beginning of the letter.

²⁵ *Nges don 'brug sgra*, pp.181–83 (the quotation of the ordinance), pp.183–87 (Sog zlog pa's interpretation) and pp.187–203 (his response to it).

²⁶ *Tho yig*, p.673, no.15802.

²⁷ Unfortunately, the collection of refutations of false *mantras* published in Thimphu entitled *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor* does not include Ye shes 'od's ordinance. I take the opportunity here to thank Gregory Hillis for providing me with a copy of the text.

²⁸ Karmay (1998a). For the date of issue of the ordinance cf. Vitali (1996), p.239.

II.2.2. THE *SNGAGS LOG SUN 'BYIN RGYAS PA* BY RIN CHEN BZANG PO

Sa paṇ kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251) refers to a work by Rin chen bzang po entitled "Treatise on the Distinction of Dharma and Non-Dharma" (*Chos dang chos min rnam par byed pa'i bstan bcos*),²⁹ whereas Bu ston mentions a certain "Extensive Refutation of False Mantras" (*Sngags log sun 'byin pa rgyas pa*) by the renowned translator.³⁰ It would be, indeed, interesting to learn about Rin chen bzang po's position. Nevertheless this work, although documented by A khu chin in his list of rare texts, seems not to be available at present.³¹ All we know about Rin chen bzang po's view regarding the Rnying ma *tantras* is that he, in general, considered them inauthentic (*yang dag ma yin pa*).³² Thus as long as we do not have any access to Rin chen bzang po's *Sngags log sun 'byin*, we will never know if and how he treated the *Guhyagarbha*.

II.2.3. THE ORDINANCE (*BKA' SHOG*) OF ZHI BA 'OD

The next important early source is the ordinance of Zhi ba 'od. Not only does Bu ston count Zhi ba 'od as a critic of the Rnying ma *tantras*,³³ he also alludes to a certain "Refutation of False Mantras" composed by him.³⁴ Sa paṇ, however, sounds somewhat skeptical about the existence of such a work.³⁵ Sog zlog pa fully quotes a polemical composition by Zhi ba 'od in his *Nges don 'brug sgra*, referring to it as an "ordinance" (*bka' shog*).³⁶ A khu chin mentions such a

²⁹ *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, p.94.

³⁰ *Bu ston chos 'byung*, p.313. Bu ston's description of Rin chen bzang po's "Refutations of False Mantra" as "extensive" is perhaps due to its relative large size of forty-eight folios (see the following footnote). Most of the earlier writings on the topic are very brief. There is also reference to Rin chen bzang po's works, among others, in Chag lo tsā ba's *Sngags log sun 'byin shes rab ral gri*, just before the suspicious author's colophon: *sun 'byin 'di dang mthun par rin chen bzang po'i sngags log sun 'byin dang 'gos dang pho brag zhi ba 'od dang tsa mi la sogs pa'i springs yig dang paṇḍita shākya shrt'i zhus lan dang lho brag gi gze ma ra mgo dang/ dpag med kyi springs yig yod dol/ chag lo chen pos mdzad pa dge legs 'phel/*. See the *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor*, pp.17f.

³¹ *Tho yig*, p.673, no.15801: ([vol.] ka) *pa la rin chen bzang po'i sngags log sun 'byin la zhe brgyad*.

³² *Bu ston chos 'byung*, p.266.

³³ *Bu ston chos 'byung*, p.266.

³⁴ *Bu ston chos 'byung*, p.313.

³⁵ *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, p.95: *de yi slob ma zhi ba 'od/ des kyang sngags log sun 'byin pa/ zhes bya'i bstan bcos mdzad ces zer/*.

³⁶ *Nges don 'brug sgra*, pp.204–17.

two-folio work by this author and designates it a letter (*springs yig*).³⁷ The two are presumably referring to the same text. This work too was edited, translated and analyzed by Karmay based on the text cited by Sog zlog pa.³⁸ Unlike the ordinance of his father Ye shes 'od, the ordinance of Zhi ba 'od is more specific in its details. A number of *tantras*, inclusive of the group to which the *Guhyagarbha* belongs, are referred to there as adulterated (*dres ma*). Here again there is no explicit mention of the *Guhyagarbha* itself. Perhaps one should differentiate here between an accusation of the *tantras* being adulterated and an outright rejection of their authenticity. One might assume that the expression “and others” (*la sogs pa rnams*)³⁹ which refers to other *tantras* in the *Māyā* cycle, is intended to include the *Guhyagarbha*. Yet I believe that the *Guhyagarbha* may not have been included within this group of syncretistic texts. If the *Guhyagarbha* had been considered by Zhi ba 'od to be apocryphal or syncretistic, one might expect it to have been mentioned, especially since he did mention the *Spar khab*,⁴⁰ a *Guhyagarbha* commentary ascribed by the Rnying ma pas to the Indian scholar Vilāsavajra (= Sgeg pa'i rdo rje), claiming it to be an indigenous work composed by Zur chen shākya 'byung gnas (1002–62) and others.⁴¹ And the fact that the

³⁷ *Tho yig*, p.673, no.15801: *de'i sras chung ba* [i.e., the younger son of Ye shes 'od] *pho brang zhi ba 'od kyi springs yig la gnyis*!

³⁸ Karmay (1980b).

³⁹ *Nges don 'brug sgra*, p.205: *nang pa la sgyu 'phrul gyi rgyud la bcu gsum pa dang/ bcu dgu pa dang/ bzhi bcu pa dang/ brgyad bcu pa dang le'u lag la sogs pa rnams ni 'dres mar snang*!

⁴⁰ The term *spar khab* is attested in none of the lexicons and dictionaries I consulted. Since I have been so far unable to locate any discussion of its meaning in any of the commentarial literature either, the meaning of the term must remain obscure for the time being.

⁴¹ The status of the *Spar khab* (Otani 4718) is a complex one. Even Klong chen pa (*Phyogs bcu mun sel*, p.74) dismissed this text as “Tibetan” (*bod ma*) and thus “unreliable” (*yid rten du mi rung ba*). The *Blue Annals*, apart from mentioning Klong chen pa's preference for Rong zom pa's commentary to the *Spar khab*, also reports that Zur chen studied this work under one teacher called Thod dkar nam mkha' sde. See Roerich (1988), pp.110 & 157. In any case, although Zur chen pa does seem to have had something to do with this text, whether he was the author is questionable. Sog zlog pa (*Nges don 'brug sgra*, p.210), on the other hand, states: “Concerning the *Spar khab*, it is certain that a disciple of Jetāri called Vilāsavajra who attained the *siddhi* of White Mañjuśrī had composed it. Because of its fine and profound literary expressions, it totally lacks the style of a Tibetan composition” (*spar khab ni jetāri'i slob ma 'jam dkar gyi sgrub thob slob dpon sgeg pa'i rdo rje zhes pa des mdzad pa nges pa stel tshig bzang zhing brling bas bod rtsom gyi nyams*

Guhyagarbha was not included in this list, no doubt, led Sog zlog pa to believe that Zhi ba 'od had considered it an authentic *tantra*.⁴²

II.2.4. THE *SNGAGS LOG SUN 'BYIN BY 'GOS KHUG PA LHAS BTSAS*

The *Sngags log sun 'byin* attributed to Lhas btsas is of particular interest for the history of the *Guhyagarbha* and the controversies surrounding it, for Lhas btsas was not only a contemporary of Zur chen shākya 'byung gnas (1002–62), Zur chung Shes rab grags pa (1014–74) and Rong zom pa, all important exponents of the *Guhyagarbha*, but is also said to have confronted these three scholars in person.⁴³ While Sa paṇ does refer to a *Sngags log sun 'byin* by Lhas btsas,⁴⁴ Bu ston, in spite of including Lhas btsas as a critic of the Rnying ma *tantras* in his history of Buddhism, makes no mention of such a work by him.⁴⁵ A khu chin mentions a certain four-folio *Spring yig* by Lhas btsas.⁴⁶ Sog zlog pa states that three propaganda pamphlets (*'byams yig*) attributed to Lhas btsas were known to have existed, viz., an extensive (*rgyas*), a medium (*'bring*) and a short (*bsdus*) one.⁴⁷ When he wrote his *Nges don 'brug sgra*, he had access to only two of them and believed that a third did not exist at all.⁴⁸

gtan nas med!). See also Karmay (1998b), p.32, n.78, and Loseries (1989), p.218, n.35. Mkhan po nram grol tshe ring (b. 1953) proposed two explanations regarding Klong chen pa's comment on the *Spar khab*: (a) The text is indeed corrupt, since in the course of the textual transmissions, “annotations crept (lit. “were lost” or “fell”) into the text” (*mchan gzhang la shor ba*). (b) Some teachers are of the opinion that two different texts are in question: the *Spar khab* composed by an Indian master and another text entitled *Spar khab bod ma* (A Tibetan *spar khab*) which was the one referred to by Klong chen pa. I shall, however, refrain from making any definite statement at this point.

⁴² *Nges don 'brug sgra*, pp.217 & 299.

⁴³ It is said that Lhas btsas went to Zur chen to study but was made to work. Displeased, he went to 'Brog mi who demanded gold in exchange for tantric instructions. He left 'Brog mi, went to India, and later became one of the most prolific translators of the Gsar ma era. See Roerich (1988), p.360; also cf. the *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, p.475. For his meetings with Zur chung and Rong zom pa, see Roerich (1988), pp.121 & 165, respectively.

⁴⁴ *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, p.95: *lhas bias zhes bya'i lo tsā ba// des kyang chos log sun 'byin pa// zhes bya'i bstan bcos mdzad nas ni// chos dang chos min nram par phyel*!

⁴⁵ *Bu ston chos 'byung*, p.266.

⁴⁶ *Tho yig*, p.673, no.15805: ([vol.] *kha pa la*) ... *rta nag 'gos khug pa lhas btsas kyi spring yig la bzhi*!

⁴⁷ *Nges don 'brug sgra*, p.217.

⁴⁸ Which two of these three pamphlets were available to Sog zlog pa is unclear.

Nonetheless, on the basis of the content of these and other stylistic features, he agrees with the opinion of some unidentified scholars (*mkhas pa kha cig*) that the pamphlets do not seem to be by Lhas btsas. If they were indeed by Lhas btsas, he states, they should then be understood to be of intended meaning (*dgongs pa can*).⁴⁹ He nevertheless quoted what seems to be one of the two pamphlets and responded to it.⁵⁰ The *Sngags log sun 'byin* attributed to Lhas btsas published in Thimphu in 1979 is the same text discussed by Sog zlog pa. This pamphlet, whoever its author may be, while accepting the authenticity of *tantras* such as the *Guhyasamāja* (Otani 81),⁵¹ the *Candraguhyatilaka* or *Guhyendutilaka* (Otani 111), and the *Sarva-buddhasamāyoga* (Otani 8–9) (all *tantras* shared by Gsar ma and Rnying ma), alleges that the *Guhyagarbha* was composed by Rma Rin chen mchog.⁵² According to Sog zlog pa, the *Guhyagarbha* was

⁴⁹ *Nges don 'brug sgra*, p.229: *bka' shog 'di mkhas pa kha cig gis/ brjod bya bzang po gcig kyang mi snang la rjod byed kun kyang grong tshig kho nar snang/ de'i phyir 'gos kyis mdzad pa min pa 'dra/ zhes gsungs pa bzhin du snang/*. The references to Lhas btsas as the author in the opening line of the pamphlet and in the colophon-like concluding passage seem suspect and are likely to be later insertions. The opening line (*Sngags log sun 'byin skor*, p.18) reads: *gsang sngags mtha' dag la mkhas pa/ mkhas pa'i dbang phyug 'gos khug pa lhas btsas kyis gdams pa/* and the concluding passage (op. cit., p.25): *brtse ba'i dbang gis lo tsā ba mkhas pa chen po 'gos khug pa lhas btsas kyis sngags pa dang rab 'byung chos nor ba la zhugs pa rnam la phan pa'i phyir du 'di bsgyur (!) ba yin nol/*. Also the presence of the verb *bsgyur* in the last passage raises questions. Thus, unless a more reliable manuscript is located and the text critically edited, nothing certain can be said. Furthermore, the versions of the pamphlets available at present are abound in textual problems. The publishers of the Thimphu edition note: "Although the spellings in the master copy of the letters by Chag lo and 'Gos are not satisfactory, they are set to print in order to enable [further] investigation" (*chag lo dang 'gos kyis springs yig 'di gnyis ma dpe dag cha thon pa mi 'dug kyang dpyod pa 'jug phyir par du bkod pa lags*).

⁵⁰ Although Sog zlog pa did not specify which one of the two pamphlets he cited, one would assume he chose the larger of the two which presumably offered more details for discussion. Owing to the structure of the text as found in Sog zlog pa's *Nges don 'brug sgra*, it is quite improbable, in my opinion, that he combined the two pamphlets and cited them together.

⁵¹ For the Sanskrit edition of the *Guhyasamāja tantra*, see Matsunaga (1978).

⁵² *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor*, pp.20f.: *dus phyis rin chen mchog gis gsang ba snying po brtsams/*. See also the *Nges don 'brug sgra*, p.220. Rma Rin chen mchog was one of the first seven monks who were ordained by Śāntarakṣita on a trial basis, hence referred to as the "seven persons on test" (*sad mi bdun*). See Obermiller (1986), p.190. He is also counted as one of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava who demonstrated his sign of *siddhi* by devouring boulders as food (*pha bong zas su za*) (*Nyang ral chos 'byung*, p.342). He is further said to be the person who invited Vimalamitra to Tibet and is considered as the translator of many

also attributed to Vairocana by some scholars whom he does not specify.⁵³

III. THE CRITIQUE⁵⁴

As we have seen, most of the sources of critique described above, with the exception of the *Sngags log sun 'byin* attributed to Lhas btsas, do not specify the *Guhyagarbha* as an apocryphal *tantra*.⁵⁵ Relying on Rong zom pa's allusion to the critique, however, it is certain that the *Guhyagarbha* was indeed alleged to be either

tantric works belonging to the *Māyā* cycle including the *Guhyagarbha* (op. cit. pp.422 & 435). According to Nyang ral, during Glang dar ma's persecution of Buddhism in Tibet, Rin chen mchog hid himself in 'U yug for nine months disguised as a woman. Charged (*snyad btags*) with using women for tantric practices, he was assassinated at a water source (*chu kha gcig tu*) one evening (op. cit., p.437). The *Sngags log sun 'byin* attributed to Lhas btsas, however, alleges that Rma Rin chen was punished severely (*bka' bcad dam po byas*) for composing the *Guhyagarbha* and its supplementary (*kha skong*) *tantras* and died in Nyang rong in Gtsang (*Sngags log sun 'byin skor*, p.21).

⁵³ *Nges don 'brug sgra*, p.212: "Again, some allege that the *Guhyagarbha* was composed by Vairocana but nobody seems to have sound reasons" (*yang kha gcig gsang [ba] snying po bai ros byas so zer te gtan tshigs yang dag pa ni su la yang smra rgyu mi 'dug goll/*).

⁵⁴ The *Guhyagarbha* is also charged with containing the so-called "four defects of falsities" (*log pa'i skyon bzhi*). See, for example, the *Rgyud don gsal byed me long* by G.yung ston Rdo rje dpal (1284–1365), which reads (p. 44): *kha cig na re/ gsang ba snying po 'di la log pa'i skyon bzhi yod del/ rgyud gzhan na 'di skad thos bya ba yod pa la/ 'dir 'di skad bshad bya ba byung bas gleng gzhi log goll/ gzhan na dus gsum yod pa las/ 'dir dus bzhi byung ba dus log/ rgyud kyi bdag po kun tu bzang po yin pa la dkyil 'khor gyi gtsa bo rdo rje sems dpa' byung bas dkyil 'khor log/ sgrub pa'i zhag dang tshes grangs ni/ rgyud las smos pa bzhin du bshad/ ces kha 'phangs pas rgyud log go zhe na/*. I shall, however, refrain from discussing these allegations here for neither the "Refutations of False Mantras" that I consult here nor Rong zom pa seem to have been aware of them, at least not in the form known to later scholars such as G.yung ston.

⁵⁵ Also the *Sngags log sun 'byin* (*Sngags log sun 'byin skor*, pp.1–18) attributed to Chag lo tsā ba chos rje dpal (1197–1246) does not explicitly mention the *Guhyagarbha*. One of the questions (no.15) Chag lo posed to Sa paṇ concerned the identification of Rnying ma and Gsar ma '*tantras*' composed by Tibetans. Sa paṇ, in his answer, named only a few *tantras*, not including the *Guhyagarbha*. He refrained from being very explicit (*gsal kha ston*) fearing that it would hurt (*phog thug*) those concerned. See the *Chag lo'i zhus lan*, pp.545f. Could the *Guhyagarbha* be one of the *tantras* he thought were apocryphal but did not dare mention? On the other hand, given his relative favorable opinion of Rnying ma tantric teachings in general, as expressed in his *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, the *Guhyagarbha*, a very important Rnying ma *tantra*, was probably not considered by him as apocryphal.

compiled or composed by earlier Tibetan Upādhyāyas already during his time. Unlike Lhas btsas' "Refutation of False *Mantras*" which does not provide the reason for this allegation, Rong zom pa, when referring to the opponents' position, explains, as we shall see below, why the authenticity of this *tantra* was questioned.

IV. RONG ZOM PA'S DEFENSE

Rong zom pa's tactics of defense can be fully understood only by placing them in the broader context of his general methods of exposition. Given the scope and size of the paper, however, I can mention them here only briefly. A fundamental conviction of his, which he applies to argumentation, appears to be that objectivity (*blo gzu bo*) is indispensable for any discussion.⁵⁶ His rare sense of objectivity is accompanied by a readiness to combat using reasoning that are invincible against the faults of others (*skyon gyis mi brdzi ba*), his choice of decisive (*thog tu phab pa*) authoritative scriptures, his skilful use of the quintessential instructions of his predecessors and of the treatises of grammar (*sgra'i bstan bcos*) and reasoning (*rigs pa'i bstan bcos*). In addition, his expositions are marked with striking analogies and short anecdotes that didactically lend a powerful effect. Employing these methods, he seeks to convince his critics by means of persuasion rather than by reactive attacks.

The objective of Rong zom pa's defense of the *Guhyagarbha* is to establish it as the word (*bka'*) of the Buddha in general⁵⁷ as well as to

⁵⁶ *Gsung thor bu*, p.129: "Even if one notices mistakes [in my writings], one should, having first set aside the philosophical tenets of others and oneself, investigate [them] with an objective mind and scrutinize [them] well [to see if they] turn out to be faulty or not. If the fault of contradicting both authoritative scriptures and reasoning is indeed noticed, one should even write résumés at the end of this [text] to refute (or ward off people from) this view [of mine], [thus] benefiting the people in the future" (*gal te gang zag gis nyes pa'i skyon mthong na yang/ dang por rang dang gzhan gyi grub pa'i mtha' btang stel/ gzu bos blos nges par rtogs la/ skyon du/ gyur ba'am mi/ gyur ba legs par dpyad par gyis shig/ nges par lung dang rigs pa gnyi(s) ka dang/ gal ba'i skyon mthong bar/ gyur na/ lta ba de nyid las rab tu bzlog pa'i yi ge dag kyang/ di'i rjes su bris shig/ ma 'ongs pa'i gang zag rnam la phan par/ gyur rol/*).

⁵⁷ *Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.76: "To those who doubt whether or not this treatise is the word taught by the Omniscient One, [its] coherency with the general authoritative scriptures should be established" (*gzhung nyid thams cad mkhyen pas gsungs pa'i bka' yin nam ma yin the tshom bza' ba rnam la ni/ gzhung spyi'i 'brel ba bsgrub par bya ba yin nol/*). See also op. cit. p.78. At the end of his legitimization of the

counter the specific allegations against it. In order to fulfil his first objective, he calls the "three witnesses" (*dpang po gsum*), namely, the witness of prophecy (*lung bstan pa'i dpang po*), the witness of person (*gang zag gi dpang po*) and the witness of scriptural coherency (*lung 'brel ba'i dpang po*), to the witness-stand.⁵⁸ By witness of prophecy, he means a prediction regarding certain teachings or individuals made by someone accepted by the opponent as an authority. Witness of person refers to an individual of authority accepted by the opponent. References to key concepts of the text in question in a generally accepted work are described by him as witness of reasoning or witness of scriptural coherency. He first applies these three witnesses to prove the omniscience of Buddha Śākyamuni to the non-Buddhist Brahmins of India, then to prove the validity of *Mahāyāna* teachings to the *śrāvakas*, and then the validity of *Vajrayāna* teachings to the proponents of the *Pāramitā* teachings of the *Mahāyāna*. As for the latter, however, the key *Vajrayāna* concepts that he defends are essentially and primarily those of the inner *tantras* of the Earlier Propagation rather than of *Vajrayāna* in general.

Vajrayāna, he repeats his objective in the following manner (*Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.82): "Thus the Buddhas, the Bhagavans, would neither manifest nor give sublime teachings without witnesses. [They] would not teach [anything that could be] an object of skepticism. The skeptics, out of their pride, would not generate devotion even for an extraordinary person. Out of ignorance, they would not even give rise to the thought of looking for witnesses. They are ignorant [and] ignoble [persons] who, because of their scant learnedness, have not even heard about the three kinds of witnesses established by the Victorious One. Such establishment of the [scriptural] coherency [is carried on here] because of the possibility of such [skeptics]" (*de lta bas na sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das rnam ni dpang po dang bral bar gzugs kyi sku mi ston shing/ dam pa'i chos mi ston tel/ the tshom gyi gnas mi ston nol/ gang dag the tshom bza' ba rnam ni nga rgyal gyi dbang gis gang zag khyad par can la yang mos pa mi skyed la/ gti mug gis dpang po tshol ba'i blo yang mi skyed/ thos pa chung bas rgyal ba'i dpang po rnam po gsum bzhas pa yang ma thos pa'i blun po ma rabs rnam yin tel/ 'brel ba bsgrub pa/ di lta bu yang de lta bu dag srid pa'i phyr yin nol/*).

⁵⁸ As for the term "witness," it is explained in the *Dkon mchog 'grel* (p.78) as follows: "Of course 'witness' is said generally in terms of a trustworthy person. But there is no fault in applying the term 'witness' also to other evidences, if they can be trusted. These witnesses are established from the standpoint of the opponents themselves, and thus are suitable for being causes of trust" (*de la spyir dpang po zhes bya ba ni yid ches pa'i gang zag gi sgo nas brjod pa yin mod kyi/ 'on kyang gtan tshigs gzhan yang yid ches par byed nus na dpang po'i sgras brjod pa la nyes pa med dol/ dpang po de dag kyang rgol ba nyid la grub pa yin tel/ de bas na yid ches pa'i rgyur rung ba nyid dol/*).

Here I shall provide a translation of the portion concerning the authenticity of the *Vajrāyāna*.⁵⁹

In addition, the proponents of the *Pāramitā* [teachings] of the *Mahāyāna* allege: "There is no certainty that the *Mantrayāna* [teachings] are the word of the Omniscient One." This must be responded to in a way similar to the preceding [argumentation]:

1) As for the witness of prophecy, the *sūtra*⁶⁰ *Gdams ngag 'bog pa'i rgyal po*, which is established [as authentic] by you, prophesizes:⁶¹ "A

⁵⁹*Dkon mchog 'grel*, pp.80–82: *yang theg pa chen po pha rol tu phyin pa 'dzin pa rnam na re/ gsang sngags kyi theg pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i bka' yin pa'i nges pa med do zhes zer rol/ de la snga ma bzhin du brjod par bya stel/ de la lung bstan pa'i dpang po ni khyed nyid la grub pa'i mdo sde gdams ngag 'bog pa'i rgyal po las/ nga ni 'di nas mi snang nas/ lo ni brgya dang bcu gnyis na/ bstan pa'i snying po dam pa zhig/ 'dzam gling lho yi phyogs ngos kyi/ rgyal po dza zhes bya ba la/ thugs rje mthun pa'i byin rabs kyi/ lag na rdo rje snang bar byed/ ces lung bstan pa yin tel/ lung bstan pa dang mthun par thun mong du grags pa ni/ gsang sngags kyi theg pa yin pa'i phyir lung bstan pa'i dpang po dang bcas pa'o/ gang zag gi spang po ni byang chub sems dpa' phyag na rdo rje rtag tu bcom ldan 'das kyi mdun du 'gro zhing/ theg pa chen po thams cad kyi sdu/ pa po yin par mdo sde nyid la grags la/ de yang lho phyogs gyad kyi yul lha ma srin sde brgyad dang bcas pa'i 'khor gyi dkyil 'khor du/ bcom ldan 'das shākya thub pas dbang bskur bar thung mong du grags pa yin noll/ byang chub sems dpa' phyag na rdo rjes gsang sngags thams cad bsdus nas/ mkhan po ku ku la sogs pa skal ba dang ldan pa rnam la bshad pas gang zag gi dpang po dang bcas pa'o/ phyag na rdo rje mthong ba'i skal ba dang mi ldan pa rnam la mkhan po ku ku yang gsang sngags thun mongs du ma grags pa'i gong du sde snod gsum po 'dzam bu gling na shes nyen (nyan?) che bar thun mong du grags pa stel/ des dpal phyag na rdo rje'i zhal mthong nas dngos grub chen po phul du hyung ba brnyes pa yang thun mong du grags pa yin noll/ de'i phyir gang zag gi dpang po dang bcas pa'o/ lung 'brel ba'i dpang po yang yod del/ de yang pha rol tu phyin pa'i mdo sde nyid las/ bdag dang sangs rgyas rang bzhin mnyam par gnas pa dang/ phung po lnga grangs med pa'i de bzhin bshegs pa yin pa dang/ nyon mongs pa de bzhin bshegs pa'i rigs yin pa dang/ nyon mongs pa rang bzhin rnam par grol ba yin pa dang/ sems can gyi sems rang byung gi ye shes kyi snying po can yin pa dang/ chos thams cad rnam par bsgrub pa nye bar gzhag pa'i mtshan nyid can yin pa dang/ bcom ldan 'das shākya thub pa'i zhing kham yongs su ma dag par snang ba 'di nyid kyang yongs su dag pa'i zhing kham yin pa dang/ 'jug pa dam pa gnyis su med pa'i tshul la jug pa yin pa dang/ de bzhin bshegs pa mchod pa'i dam pa bud med kyi mnyes par byas pa la sogs pa yin pa ni khyed kyi lung pha rol tu phyin pa'i tshul gyi mdo sde kyi gsungs pa yin la/ gsang sngags kyi tshul las kyang/ don de dag nyid ji ltar bsgrub pa'i thabs legs par gtan la phab pa tsam du zad pas lung 'brel pa'i dpang po grub pa yin noll.*

⁶⁰ I have rendered the Tibetan term *mdo sde* as *sūtra* throughout and not as *sūtrapīṭaka*, the proper rendering of which is rather in Tibetan *mdo sde'i sde snod*. As recorded in the *Mahāvīyutpattī*, the term *mdo sde* is a translation of either *sūtrānta* or simply *sūtra*.

⁶¹ There are different versions of this prophecy quoted by different authors from various sources used to validate the *Vajrāyāna*. See Karmay (1998c). See also

hundred and twelve years after my disappearance from here, a supreme essence of doctrine will be revealed by Vajrapāṇi, through the blessings corresponding [to his] compassion, to a king of the southern part of Jambudvīpa called Dza." Because the *Mantrayāna* is the one commonly known to be associated with [this] prophecy, it has the witness of prophecy.

2) The witness of person is the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi who is known in the *sūtras* to have constantly been in the presence of the Buddha and as the compiler of all *Mahāyāna* [teachings]. He is also commonly known to have been initiated by the Bhagavan Śākyamuni into the *maṇḍala* consisting of eight classes of [beings who were] neither gods nor demons [in] the Southern land of acrobats. Because the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, after having compiled all [teachings of] the *Mantra[yāna]*, taught the fortunate ones such as Upādhyāya Kuku[rāja], it has also the witness of person. Before the *Mantra[yāna]* became commonly known, Upādhyāya Kuku[rāja] was known as the most learned one in the three baskets [of the canonical corpus] among those who were not fortunate enough to see Vajrapāṇi. He is also commonly known to have received great and extraordinary accomplishments after having seen Vajrapāṇi. Therefore, it has the witness of person.

3) There is also the witness of scriptural coherency. It is taught in the *Pāramitā sūtras*⁶² that (a) the Buddha and we are of the same nature, (b) the five aggregates are countless *tathāgatas*, (c) the defilements are the *tathāgata* families, (d) the defilements are fully liberated by nature, (e) the minds of sentient beings are of the essence of the innately occurring gnosis, (f) all phenomena are characterized by their contributing⁶³ to the attainment [of the ultimate result], (g) even the field of the Bhagavan Śākyamuni that appears to be utterly impure is an utterly pure [Buddha] field, (h) the supreme 'entering' is the 'entering' into the ways of non-duality, and (i) the best offering or service that can be rendered to the *tathāgatas* is to please women. [Teachings] such as these are taught in the *sūtras* of the *Pāramitā* way,

Gsung thor bu, p.49: *gdam ngags 'phogs pa'i mdo zhes bya ba gsang ba lung ston pa'i mdo ...*; cf., op. cit., p.36.

⁶² The expression "*Pāramitā sūtras*" obviously does not refer to the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature alone but to the *Mahāyāna sūtras* that the author considers to be of "definitive meaning" (*nges don*). For the individual *sūtra* references to these statements, see the following passage in the *Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.82.

⁶³ The meaning of the term *nye bar gzhag pa* in this passage as well as in the following one (which is not quoted here) obviously differs from its meaning used in other terms such as in *dran pa nye bar gzhag pa* (*smṛtyupasthāna*). See the *Mahāvīyutpattī*, nos. 952–56. Perhaps a meaning of *nye bar bzhag pa* "to wait upon," "to serve," "to help" (*upasthāna*) fits the context. See Edgerton (1985).

which are your authoritative scriptures. Because all the *Mantrayāna* does is nothing but excellently establish the methods in which these ideas are to be put into practice, the witness of scriptural coherency is established.

IV.1. RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC PHILOLOGICAL OR TEXTUAL ISSUES

Rong zom pa's response to the allegation in connection with specific philological or textual issues may come as a surprise to some. He does not categorically rule out the possibility of the *tantra* being a compilation or a composition by a Tibetan scholar or of its containing redundancies, but rather addresses his opponents from a stance of spiritual ethics, trying to persuade them that in spite of such a possibility, one should approach the text with reason and respect on the basis of its scriptural coherency.⁶⁴

When the *tathāgatas*, through their blessings, appear to the minds of [sentient beings] who are fit to be trained and benefit them and teach [them] the Doctrine, [they are] not limited to appearing only in extraordinary physical bodies. They may appear as ordinary as well as extraordinary, or as inferior as well as superior. And there is no Buddha activity that the Buddhas do not perform due to the fact that sentient beings are defiled through the four *māras* and the eighty-[four?] thousand defilements. Therefore, the appearances of the blessings of the Buddhas occur in association with the appearances of conceptions. Thus no negative thoughts should be generated against the persons [i.e., the previous masters alleged to have composed '*tantras*']. If a spiritual friend is endowed with faith, discriminatory wisdom, concentration and the vows which are assisting factors for

⁶⁴ *Dkon mchog 'grel*, pp.83f.: *de bzhin bshegs pa rnam kyī byin gyis brlabs gdul bya rnam kyī rgyud la snang ste/ phan pa dang chos nyid ston pa na/ gzugs kyī sku khyad par can snang ba 'ba' zhig tu ris su chad pa med de/ 'di lta du thun mong dang khyad par du snang yang rung/ dman pa dang dam par yang rung/ tha na bdud bzhi po dag dang nyon mongs pa stong phrag brgyad cu po dag gis sems can rnam nyon mongs par byed pa dag gis sangs rgyas rnam sangs rgyas kyī mdzad pa mi byed pa gang yang med do/ de bas na de bzhin bshegs pa byin gyis brlabs 'byung ba yang rnam par rtog pa'i snang ba dang 'dres nas byung ste/ de'i phyir gang zag la ngan sems mi bskyed do/ dad pa dang shes rab dang ting nge 'dzin dang de'i grogs su gyur pa'i sdom pa dang ldan na dge ba'i bshes gnyen yang sangs rgyas nyid dang 'dra ste/ mdo sde'i gzhung las slob dpon brtags pa'i sangs rgyas su gsungs pa bzhin no/ de lta bu'i yon tan dang ldan na sangs rgyas la brien nas mtshams med pa'i las gsog pa de bzhin bshegs pa la ngan sems kyī[s] phrag phyung ba bzhin no/ de bas na lung 'brel ba yod na da lta gang zag gi dpang po med kyang the tshom gyi gnas su bya ba yang ma yin na/ dngos su skur pa gdab pa lta ci smos ste/ 'di lta bu la sogs pa ni shin tu bzod par dka'o/.*

those (i.e., faith etc.), he is similar to the Buddha himself; [it is] like in the *sūtra* treatises in which too the master is said to be a resemblance of the Buddha.⁶⁵ If [a master] possesses such qualities, [by despising him as a falsifier of *tantras*], one accumulates immeasurable [bad] *karma* in connection with the Buddha, similar to the *karma* accumulated by causing the *tathāgata* to bleed out of evil motives. Thus if there is a scriptural coherency, and even if there is no witness of person at present, one should not make [the *tantra*] an object of doubt, let alone directly deprecate it. [Deeds] such as this are of extreme severity.

As we have seen, it was suspected that the questionable *tantras* could not possibly be the cause of tantric activities and accomplishments. To this, Rong zom pa responds by indicating that the authenticity of a *tantra* is not the only prerequisite for the attainment of *siddhis*:⁶⁶

⁶⁵ I am not sure if the text should read *btags* instead of *brtags*, hence translating as "the master is a 'designated' (or 'labeled') Buddha." The term *brtags* can also be the past form of *rtog* "to imagine" or "to conceptualize" but this meaning does not seem to be suitable here. See also the *Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.224.

⁶⁶ *Dkon mchog 'grel*, pp.84f.: *las dang dngos grub kyī rgyur mi rung ba ni/ rgyal ba'i bka' dam pa nyid yin du zin kyang/ slob dpon dam tshig nyams par gyur pa dang/ bka' chad kyī gnas su gyur pa rnam kyī lag nas brgyud pa'i gzhung gi tshogs dang/ kha las brgyud pa'i man ngag gis tshogs kyī las dang dngos grub 'grub par 'gyur ba ni/ skal ba dang dad pa dang mnyam par bzahg pa rnam shin tu phul du gyur pa 'ga' zhig las ma gtogs pa/ gzhan rgyur rung ba ma yin no/ de bas na shes bya la phyin ci ma log par smra ba rnam kyī ched du ni gzhung 'brel pa'i rigs pa grub pa kho nas chog par bya'o/ las dang dngos grub myur du thob par bya ba la ni bla ma dam pa rnam kyī bka' thob pa kho na bdag po'i rkyen yin tel 'di dag tsam gyis gang zag gi bya ba yongs su rdzogs par 'gyur rol/ gzhan du rgyud kyī gzhung la gang zag gis bslad pa la sogs par the tshom za bas ni skyon gyi gzhi mang por 'gyur tel dad pa tsam gyis rab tu 'jug bya'i phyir/ rnam par dpyad pa 'di ni ming tsam ste/ gang zhig sgom pa de ni yang dag bral/ zhes gsungs pa lta bu ste/ bka'i spong len byed pa theg pa chen po'i spyi'i dam tshig nyams pa'i rgyur bshad do/ gzhan yang chos la brten nas las kyī sgrib pa gsog pa'i rgyur 'gyur ba dang/ gang zag la brten nas de bzhin du 'gyur ba ni sangs rgyas la brten nas las kyī sgrib pa gsog pa nyid dang 'dra'o/ de bas na rgyud kyī gzhung ldab bu la sogs par ston pa dang/ gal te mkhan po rnam kyis bsdu shing sbyar ba srid na yang/ de bzhin bshegs pa'i byin gyis rlabs byung ba la tshul nges pa med pa yin pas the tshom gyi yul du bya ba ma yin no/ yang gal te lta ba mtho dman la rtsod pa 'di ni sems can gyi don du gyur ba yin pas rgyal bas kyang gnang ba yin la/ sngon gyi mkhan po rnam kyis kyang bshad pas/ lta ba dman la smad pa 'di la nyes skyon med do zhe na/ 'di lta bu ni gong du lung spyi'i 'brel pa bsgrub pa dang 'dra ste/ mu stegs can gyis legs par bshad pa'i gzhung yang sangs rgyas rnam kyis byin gyis brlabs pa dang sprul pas bshad pa yin pa/ sangs rgyas nyid kyis lung bstan pa yin na/ de bzhin gshegs pa nyid du snang bas gsungs pa'i lung lta smos kyang ci dgos tel rgyal ba rnam kyis 'gro ba'i don du gsungs pa 'dra bas/ theg pa chung ngu rnam la yang spang zhang sun dbyung bar mi bya'o/ lta ba mtho dman dang thabs che chung yang yod pa yin pas*

As for the unsuitability of [such questionable *tantras* to function as] the cause of [tantric] activities and accomplishments, even if [a *tantra*] is the authentic word of the Victorious One, it will not—except for some remarkable few who are fortunate, devoted and have [engaged in] meditative equipoise—be suitable as a cause for [tantric] activities and accomplishments through the collection of [related] treatises and quintessential instructions transmitted, respectively, from the hand and the mouth of teachers, whose tantric pledges have deteriorated and whose continuity of transmission has been interrupted. Therefore, it should be realized that for the proponents of non-erroneousness regarding the objects of knowledge the establishment of the reasoning of scriptural coherency alone would suffice.

Only the reception of teachings from a genuine master [can] be the dominating condition for a quick attainment of [tantric] activities and accomplishments. It is through this [reception of teachings] that the tasks of a person are thoroughly accomplished. Otherwise, suspecting tantric treatises of having been manipulated by persons and of other [faults] will give rise to bases for numerous shortcomings. As it is stated:

Because one enters [the path] with faith alone,

This analytical analysis is a mere theory

From which one who meditates is completely free.⁶⁷

It is explained that the rejection or acceptance of the [Buddha's] word [due to prejudices] is the cause of deterioration of the general *Mahāyāna* commitments. Furthermore, the causes for accumulating karmic obscurations related to the Doctrine and such [obscurations] related to the person are similar to the [causes for] accumulating karmic obscurations in connection with the Buddha. Therefore, even if tantric treatises are taught with overlaps and so on, and even if it is possible that they were compiled and composed by [Tibetan] Upādhyāyas, they should not be considered objects of doubt, for the ways the blessings of the *tathāgatas* appear are not restricted.

If [the opponent] states: "Even the Victorious One permitted disputing about the assessment of [various] views for it brings about benefit for sentient beings. Also the early Upādhyāyas taught so. Thus there is no

theg pa gong ma pa la yang skur pa gdab tu ga la rung ste/ rang rang gi skal ba dang mos pa ji ltar mtshams pa bzhin so sor spyad par bya'o// rgyud 'di nyid las kyang/ sa rnams khyad par bkod pa yang// gsang ba'i snying por 'gro ba'i lam// ye shes ngo mtshar rab 'byams kyis// don du mi 'gyur yongs ma gsungs// zhes gsungs pa lta bu'o// de bas na sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa rnams ni 'gro ba chud mi gson pa la so so rang bden pa yin pas/ lta ba mtho dman rtsod pa'i skabs su yang gcig la gcig smad cing rstod pa'i phyir skur pa mi bya'i/ nges pa'i don gang nye ba'i rigs pa 'gran pa tsam la nyes skyon med do//. See also the *Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.245.

⁶⁷ I am unable to identify the source of this verse.

fault in degrading the inferior views." Such [an issue] is established in a way similar to [that of] the coherency with the general authoritative scriptures. If the Buddha himself taught that even the well-expounded treatises of the *tīrthikas* are teachings [caused by] the Buddha's blessings and emanations, what need is there to mention those authoritative scriptures that were taught through the appearance of the Tathāgata himself! Because [all Buddhist teachings] are similar in so far as they were taught by the Victorious Ones for the sake of sentient beings, even the smaller vehicles should not be given up and condemned. How can one as well disparage the higher vehicles [simply] because there are [differences in] the level of the views and in the degree of the skilful means! One should, therefore, engage oneself in accordance with one's own endowments and preferences just as stated in this *tantra* [i.e., the *Guhyagarbha*].⁶⁸

The stages, though differently fashioned,

Are [all] paths leading to the Secret Essence.

Nothing meaningless has ever been taught [by the Buddhas]

Through the amazingly infinite gnosis.

Therefore, the doctrines of the Buddha are true in their own right insofar as they were [all intended] not to 'lay waste' the [fields of] living beings.⁶⁹ Thus, even while debating about the assessment of the [varying] views, one should not deprecate [any of them just] in order to condemn and refute one another. However, there is no fault in the mere contest of reasoning to assess who draws closest to the definitive meaning.

V. THE PROBABLE REASON FOR SUSPICION

Given the complicated and complex nature of the textual history of the *Guhyagarbha*, it is difficult to say anything with certainty regarding the allegations of the *tantra* being a Tibetan compilation or composition.⁷⁰ Various factors, including a peculiar phenomenon

⁶⁸ For the commentary on this verse, see the *Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.245.

⁶⁹ Cf. Sa paṇ's critique (*Sdom pa gsum rab dbye*, p.74): "Some announce to all that each vehicle is true in its own level" (*kha cig theg pa rang sa nal/ bden pa yin zhes kun la sgrogs//*). One wonders if Sa paṇ had Rong zom pa in mind. Nonetheless, before any judgement of Rong zom pa's position in this regard can be made, a thorough investigation of Rong zom pa's extensive coverage on the distinctions and similarities of the various philosophical tenets and their theories should be undertaken in order to prevent his statements from being taken out of context.

⁷⁰ The deposit of a certain manuscript of the *Guhyagarbha* in Bsam yas dkor mdzod gling, is already reported in the *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p. 308). For accounts of the discovery of a Sanskrit manuscript in Bsam yas sometime in the 12/13th

occurring in the *Guhyagarbha* called 'phyong may have contributed to its authenticity being called into question. The meaning of the term 'phyong is unclear. It appears in Nyang ral's history of Buddhism twice but unfortunately in both cases the text is obscure.⁷¹ Rong zom pa states that some claim that Rma rin chen mchog (a direct student of Vimalamitra, who in turn was instrumental in the translation, teaching and transmission of the *Guhyagarbha* extracted certain passages from other *Māyā tantras* and inserted them sporadically in the *Guhyagarbha*. Later, Gtsug ru Rin chen gzhon nu (a disciple of Rma Rin chen mchog) sorted them out, with the result that two recensions of the *Guhyagarbha* came to be transmitted, one with 'phyong (i.e., with allegedly inserted verses) and one without.⁷² Hence, for the purpose of the present discussion, I suggest rendering the term as ['sporadic] insertions.⁷³ As already mentioned, the propaganda pamphlets ascribed to Lhas btsas alleged that Rma rin chen mchog was the author of the *Guhyagarbha*. One cannot help but wonder if the allegation that Rma rin chen mchog had inserted the 'phyong was not the actual cause of the critics suspecting his authorship of the *tantra*. Thar lo nyi ma rgyal mtshan (who was Bu ston's teacher) stated in his translation colophon of the *Guhyagarbha* that the Sanskrit manuscript used by him had six 'chongs (i.e., 'phyongs) while Indian commentaries such as Sūryasimha's did not have any. It was thus clear to him that two Sanskrit versions (with and without 'phyong) had existed and that the allegation that the parts of the manuscripts (consisting of 'phyongs) were concealed in Tibet was not true.⁷⁴ Klong chen pa, too, devotes a few passages to this

century, see, for example, Roerich (1988), pp.103f. and the *Thar lo'i gyur byang*, pp.121–27.

⁷¹ See the *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, pp.422f. and 435; *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, plate 316 (fol.70b)–plate 315 (fol.71a₁) and plate 305 (fol.56a).

⁷² *Dkon mchog 'grel*, p.149: *sku yi phyag rgya che mchog ni// zhes bya ba la sogs pa ni phyong du grags pa stel/ slob dpon rin cen mchog gis sgyu 'phrul gzhan nas phyung stel/ skabs skabs su bcug pa las gtsug ru rin cen gzhon nus phong yod pa dang med pa'i dpe ris gnyis su phyed ste de bzhi du grags so zhes zer roll*. See also op. cit., p.161.

⁷³ The word 'phyong occurs seldom in Tibetan Buddhist literature whereas it seems to occur frequently in Bon po literature with a meaning nearing on "chapter." *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* gives its meaning as zur ("corner" or "side").

⁷⁴ *Thar lo'i gyur byang*, pp.121–27: 'chong drug kyang rgya dpe 'di nas tshang bar byung zhing/ rgya 'grel nyi 'od la sogs par ma byung bas/ rgya dpe la yang rgyas bsdund gnyis su yod par gsal zhing/ bod du dpe mkhyud byas zhes pa mi bden cing/ gzhung rgyas bsdund bstan pa yin noll. It appears that while some had alleged

issue in which he also classifies and explains the various types of 'phyongs.⁷⁵ My impression is that this issue, while providing fertile ground for the subsequent allegations of falsification, could also shed light on the controversial textual history of the *Guhyagarbha* if properly studied. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, no modern scholar has brought it up yet in connection with the textual problems of the *Guhyagarbha*.

VI. CONCLUSION

A discussion of Rong zom pa's defense of the authenticity of the *Guhyagarbha* and its teachings without mention of his policy of 'inclusivism' in general would be neither just nor adequate. From a doctrinal point of view, he saw the Great Perfection according to which he interpreted the *Guhyagarbha* not only as the source from which all vehicles emerge (*phros*) but also the domain where all philosophical systems can merge into one single taste of the Buddha's teachings, as remarkably illustrated in the following passage:⁷⁶

that the 'phyongs were inserted and had thus corrupted the *tantra*, others perhaps had alleged that the 'phyongs, which were legitimate parts of the *tantra*, were removed from the *tantra* and concealed. Cf. the next footnote on Klong chen pa's discussion of 'phyong (no.3).

⁷⁵ Klong chen pa presents some of the theories regarding the phenomenon of 'phyong: The first theory that he cites seems to be a verbatim reproduction of the one already mentioned by Rong zom pa. The second theory is that the *Guhyagarbha* translated by Gnyags jñānakumāra is without 'phyong and the one translated by Rma rin chen mchog is with 'phyong on account of his insertion of them. The third one is that Rma rin chen mchog concealed them (the 'phyongs) out of envy (*ser sna byas nas*). The fourth theory is that of Klong chen pa himself: The 'early translation' (*Snga 'gyur*) by Buddhaguhya and Vairocana and the 'middle translation' (*bar 'gyur*) by Padmasambhava and Gnyags jñānakumāra contained 'phyong, while the 'later translation' (*phyi 'gyur*) by Vimalamitra, Gnyags jñānakumāra and Rma rin chen mchog did not. According to Klong chen pa, whether or not the translation of the *Guhyagarbha* contains 'phyong depends on the length of the original Sanskrit manuscript used by the translators, thus indicating that the 'phyong were not inserted by Tibetans. See the *Phyogs bcu mun sel*, pp.864–66.

⁷⁶ *Lta ba'i brjed byang*, pp.12f.: *sangs rgyas kyi chos thams cad ni ro gcig pa tshul gcig pa stel/ 'di ltar mnyam pa chen po'i ngang du mthar mi 'jug cing mi 'du ba med del/ ji ltar chu phran thams cad chu chen po nams dang 'grogs tel/ rgya mtsho chen por phyin pa na thams cad lan tsha'i ro gcig pa bzhi du theg pa 'og ma pa'i sgo phra mo thams cad kyang gang zag gi bdag med par rtogs pa'i chus/ dngos por lta ba'i ljan ljin nams rims gyis ded del/ theg pa chen po nams dang bsdund nas/ mthar rdzogs pa chen po'i rgya mtsho chen por bab pa na/ mnyam pa chen po'i ngang du ro mi gcig pa'i mtshan nyid rdul phra mo tsaṃ yang med doll/ 'di ltar sangs*

All the Buddhist teachings are a single mode with a single taste. Likewise, there is in the end nothing that is not embraced and included in the expanse of the great equanimity [of the Great Perfection]. For instance, all the small rivers join the big rivers, and upon their arrival in the ocean, they all become identical in their salty taste. Similarly are all the 'minor entrances' of the lower vehicles: the water of realization of the selflessness of the individual carries along gradually all the dirt of the belief in substance, joins the greater vehicles, and finally flows into the great ocean of the Great Perfection. Then, there is not even the subtlest characteristic in the expanse of the great equanimity that is not of one taste. Likewise, amongst the Buddhist vehicles, the higher vehicles would neither [attempt] to (1) promote nor (2) demote [the degree of] elimination [of the extremes of] manifoldness in the views of the lower vehicles, which varies in [the degree of] eliminating these [extremes]. Even if [the higher vehicles] eliminate these [extremes] of manifoldness that have not been eliminated [by the lower vehicles], the fundamentals [of the views of the latter] would neither be (3) disparaged nor (4) demoted [by the former]. Thus through these four ways, one should perceive the Buddhist teachings as being of one taste. But [at the same time], one should know the distinctions [regarding the degree of their] views. This is one concise aspect of the distinction of the views. Hold this way [of explanation] as the supreme essence amongst all distinctive features of the views!

Rong zom pa thus draws a circumference (of inclusivism) that both embraces the multiplicity of the various Buddhist views and, as already shown, the well-expounded teachings of the non-Buddhists. He urges his opponents to refrain from disputations detrimental to oneself and others, encouraging them instead to adopt a tolerant approach while still engaging in objective and constructive discussions based on the principle of respect and acceptance.

rgyas pa'i theg pa rnam las gongs ma gongs mas 'og 'og ma rnam kyi lta ba la/ spros pa chod pa dang ma chod pa'i bye brag las chod pa rnam las 'bog mi 'byin pa dang/ phyir mi zlog pa gnyis/ spros pa ma gcod pa rnam las gcod par byed kyang/ gzhi khyad du mi gsod pa dang/ gzhi phyir mi zlog pa gnyis te/ de liar tshul bzhi'i sgo nas/ sangs rgyas kyi gsung gi chos thams cad ro gcig par shes par bya ba dang/ lta ba mtho dman gyi bye brag kyang shes par bya ba 'di ni lta ba'i bye brag mdor bsdus pa phyogs gcig yin te/ tshul 'di ni lta ba'i bye brag thams cad kyi nang na snying po'i mchog tu zung shig//.

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